

I'm contacting you to express my deep concern for the recent Docket 03-123 and 10-51 that if these rulings are passed VRS will cease to exist. The company that I work for, Sorenson VRS, has sought to provide the BEST interpreting services for the American Deaf and Hard of Hearing community for the last six years. Currently in my state we employ over 40 people, many of them women and breadwinners for their families. If this proposed rate of \$3.89/min is passed- these jobs will be lost in a state and economy that is already strained.

I implore you to pass a reimbursement rate that will be beneficial to all parties concerned; The FCC, professional American Sign Language interpreters and the American Deaf Community. We are a country that has sought equal opportunity for minorities, women and disabled populations- this ruling would undermine years of effort and service provided.

Ensuring that deaf individuals have access to VRS and encouraging improvements in VRS should be a high priority for you as Chairman and Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the FCC to make available to all deaf individuals nationwide ?functionally-equivalent? communications.

You will soon determine the future of VRS. When you set the VRS rate, you will determine whether America makes progress toward the statutory goals of functional equivalence, nationwide access and inclusion ? or force deaf users to revert to TTY communications. And, you will determine whether VRS fulfills its potential to drive broadband adoption by the deaf, even in the face of poverty and isolation.

I was deeply disturbed to see the Commission?s recent Public Notice on VRS rates. These proposals would put an end to VRS as we know it. My employer has already informed me that if these proposed rates are adopted, our company would head into bankruptcy. This would be disastrous for deaf VRS users.

The FCC should be increasing the availability and use of VRS, not cutting back. You should adopt a rate that encourages continuing improvements in VRS technology and continues to improve services levels. Recent developments in VRS are a good example of how the service can be improved, such as enhanced 911 services, 10-digit numbering, a larger and better-trained pool of interpreters and better videophones with an array of enhanced features. Monthly payments for broadband are a big expense for many deaf people, and instead of trying to cut back on VRS, you should be exploring ways to make VRS over broadband more affordable to deaf individuals.

Progress towards functional equivalence will be destroyed if the FCC does not encourage VRS providers to improve VRS and make it more widely available. VRS is a recent and dramatic advancement that benefits those who are deaf, but so much more can be done. It would be tragic if the FCC were to destroy this broadband service that is so vital to the deaf.

Recent reports of fraud in the VRS industry are disturbing to employees who work for a company that has operated within current FCC guidelines and has worked to maintain the integrity of the VRS fund. The FCC must devote more of its time and energy to focusing on the elimination of fraud.

I urge you to establish a fair and predictable rate for VRS that will encourage VRS providers to invest in improving VRS and reaching more deaf individuals. The law requires it and it is the right thing to do.

The rates for VRS proposed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in its April 30 Public Notice would be a disaster for VRS because ?

? The rates are so low that it would be the end of VRS as we know it today. No provider would seek to provide VRS at the low rates proposed by the FCC;

? The FCC proposes a low interim VRS rate. A better option would be a multi-year VRS rate, which would allow VRS providers to continue to invest in their offerings for the deaf.

? VRS and the improvements made to it over the years have moved us closer to the goal of ?function equivalence? mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The FCC rate proposal would destroy that progress and move us further from achieving the goals of the ADA;

? My employer has informed me that this rate proposal would lead our company into bankruptcy, leaving our deaf customers without the vital VRS service they have come to expect;

? This proposal would almost certainly mean that my job and countless others would be in jeopardy in an economy where finding a new job would be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

On a final note let me share my first experience with Sorenson VRS. During my first year with the Educational Interpreter Certificate Program in Colorado, my deaf father called me through Sorenson VRS. My dad was thrilled about this new technology and how much easier it was to use rather than forcing him to type in English, his second language, on a TTY to communicate with me. I, later, had a discussion with one of my professors about my phone conversation with my dad. I was ecstatic when she told me that she too had a Sorenson video phone. My professor showed me her video phone and how it worked. She, generously, offered the use of her video phone to call my dad. I can still

remember that momentous day like it was yesterday. It had been eight years since I last saw my dad. When we saw each other on our monitors, we both absolutely cried for joy. Words cannot express how we both felt to have the kind of technology that allowed us to converse in our own native language. Little did I know at that time that I would later become a Sorenson video relay interpreter. Everyday in my work as a Sorenson video relay interpreter I am, repeatedly, thanked by the deaf users for providing this service.

Please don't let your proposed rate cut cause the end of a service that has come to mean so much to its deaf users, their families, and those of us who provide this video relay service.